for eight projects at an approximate amount of Rs. 5250.17 crores were signed on 31.3.04 between the Government of India and Government of Japan. During 2003-04, the disbursement of ODA loans amounted to about Rs. 3243 crores at the prevailing exchange rate.

Cashew Development Board

*191.SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any suggestion/proposal for setting up of a Cashew Development Board;

(b) if so, the objectives of the Board;

(c) whether Government have taken any steps in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As per the representation received in this regard, the objectives for the suggested cashew board are to assist and regulate the export and import of cashew, development of cashew plantations, and value-added cashew processing small-scale units.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

BPL persons in Metropolitan Cities

†*192. SHRI ISAM SINGH: Will the the MINISTER OF URBAN EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons living Below Poverty Line in metropolitan cities togetherwith the number of persons living in jhuggi-jhopris; and

(b) Government's proposal to bring them above the poverty line and to provide them better accommodation facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF URBAN EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION (KUMARI SELJA): (a) The

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

number and percentage of Below Poverty Line population in Urban areas, as estimated by the Planning Commission in 1999-2000, is 670.07 lakh, being 23.62% of the total Urban population. As per the Census of India, 2001, the slum population and its percentage in 26 one million plus cities is 165.65 lakh, being 23.4% of the total population of these cities (708.14 lakh).

(b) Ministry of Urban Employment & Poverty Alleviation has been implementing, through the State/Union Territory Governments, the Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY), a Centrally Sponsored Urban Poverty Alleviation Programme, on all India basis, with effect from 01.12.1997 with a view to providing gainful employment to the urban unemployed or under-employed poor through setting up of self-employment ventures and by providing wage employment for construction of socially and economically useful public assets. The programme has been continued in the 10th Five Year Plan.

To ameliorate conditions of the urban poor/slum dwellers/Economically Weaker Sections, in providing housing, sanitation and basic infrastructural facilities the order porgrammes, such as, Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY) and National Slum Development Programme (NSDP) are vigorously implemented.

Courses on Environment and Forestry

*193. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal to introduce courses on environment and forestry;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that discussions have been held with the CBSE and the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan to have such courses in schools all over the country;

(d) if so, the details of the steps proposed to be taken; and

(e) the time schedule for introducing such courses or subjects dealing with forestry, environment sciences and wildlife?